

Jesus spoke most ardently against those who thought they didn't need a Savior; those who thought they had achieved God's approval through their many good deeds. The danger with Christianity is to mistake our traditions for works of righteousness, thereby elevating ourselves above our fellow brothers and attempting to advocate God's approval.

It may be appropriate here to define "religion" as "the cultural traditions, in matters of faith and origins, that entrap mankind in manufactured righteousness."

Jesus spoke to the most religious people = the teachers of the law & the Pharisees! They read their scriptures day and night, and performed openly the traditions of the faith to be seen by men.

The contrast between "religion" and "relationship" can be seen in the follow 3 examples.

- spiritual medication ("self deception") vs. true worship - "I'm ok because I went to church"  
John 5:39, *"You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life, These are the scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life!"*
- pursuing a better life on earth vs. surrendering your life to Christ  
Mt 16:25 *"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."* -
- manufactured righteousness vs. life transforming relationship  
Mt 5:20 *"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Jesus speaks to this danger most clearly in Matthew 7:15-23

Religion requires nothing internal, it is pure external manufactured righteousness.

1. The Commandeering: "take possession or control without authority" - The name of Jesus is easily hijacked
2. The Counterfeit: "something that looks correct but isn't" - The wrong can easily look right
3. The Communion: "sharing, intimacy, friendship, fellowship" - Relationship is essential vs. 23 "never knew you." Worship is the response of the heart towards unconditional allegiance by the whole person: mind, emotions, will, and body.
4. The Conversion: "genuine change as seen by evidence" - There is a difference between lip service to Gods will and Living out Gods will.

ANSWER THIS QUESTION: God accepts me because \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Anything other than Jesus is "RELIGION" - BE CAREFUL!